



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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NOAA Schedules Additional Public Hearing in Florida for Proposed Rule to Require Turtle Excluder Device Use for Skimmer Trawls, Pusher-Head Trawls, and Wing Nets (Butterfly Trawls)

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking comments on a proposed rule to strengthen sea turtle conservation efforts. The rule, if implemented, would require all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls) to use turtle excluder devices in their nets. The purpose of the proposed rule is to aid in the protection and recovery of listed sea turtle populations by reducing incidental bycatch and mortality of sea turtles in the southeastern U.S. shrimp fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries Service also prepared a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), which includes a description of the purpose and need for evaluating the proposed action and other potential management alternatives, the scientific methodology and data used in the analyses, background information on the physical, biological, human, and administrative environments, and a description of the effects of the proposed action and other potential management alternatives on the aforementioned environments.

For more information on the proposed rule and the documents outlining the analysis, a list of frequently asked questions regarding the proposed requirements in the southeastern shrimp fisheries can be found on the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office's website at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr.htm>.

Request for Comments

The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on May 10, 2012, and a notice of availability on the DEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on May 18, 2012. Written comments on the proposed rule

and DEIS must be received no later than July 9 and July 2, 2012, respectively, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service will be addressed in the final rule and final environmental impact statement.

Electronic copies of the proposed rule or the DEIS may be obtained from the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> and the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office's website at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr.htm>.

Public Hearing

NOAA Fisheries Service has scheduled a public hearing in Port Orange due to recent information indicating the proposed rule would impact wing net fishermen who operate in Volusia County, Florida.

This hearing will be conducted on Friday, July 6, from 10 am - 12 pm. The address for the meeting follows:

**Port Orange Public Library
1005 City Center Circle
Port Orange, FL 32129**

NOAA Fisheries Service has already held five public hearings in the following cities: Morehead City, North Carolina; Larose, Louisiana; Belle Chasse, Louisiana; D'Iberville, Mississippi; and Bayou La Batre, Alabama. NOAA Fisheries Service has also scheduled an additional public hearing on the evening of July 6 from 6-8 pm in Miami to solicit public comment from wing net fishermen who operate in Biscayne Bay, Florida.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments by either of the following methods; comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>

- Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: NOAA-NMFS-2012-0095.
- Select the appropriate title, and click “Submit a Comment.” This will display the comment webform.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Mail: Michael C. Barnette, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5505.

Fax: 727-824-5309; Attention: Michael Barnette.

All comments will be part of the public record, and generally posted for public viewing to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter, may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. Anonymous comments will be accepted.